ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) PROJECT

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IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: 15 COUNTIES NOW OPERATIONAL

On April 1, 2003 Merced and Stanislaus counties went "*live*" on the EBT system. With the addition of these two counties, 15 counties are now fully operational and the total EBT client base will be approximately 85,000 (22 percent of the statewide caseload)! The wide diversity of county locations has expanded the state's retailer base ensuring Golden State Advantage Card users have considerable retailer choices throughout the state.

Riverside County will go live on May 1. The county recently sent their conversion file to the state. April will be busy supporting the distribution of EBT cards and conducting client training throughout Riverside County.

On June 1, 2003 three more counties will be added to the EBT System. These include San Joaquin (the pilot ISAWS county), and Fresno and Tulare (CDS counties). With these counties added, there will be over 150,000 clients active in EBT by the beginning of summer!

The Implementation Team is currently supporting 26 counties in the readiness or the planning and installation phases of EBT.

FARMERS' MARKET WIRELESS POS DEMONSTRATION

The state is testing wireless point-of-sale (POS) technology as a solution for EBT in open-air produce markets such as Farmers' Markets and swap meets. The battery operated, hand-held terminal uses cellular communication technology for sending and receiving transactions. The devices are currently in use in a few Alameda County and San Francisco County Farmers' Markets. Additional devices will be deployed soon for use in several other counties.

The technology will be used and evaluated through February 2004. During the demonstration period, the state will evaluate the feasibility and cost effectiveness of this technology for EBT.

Questions about Farmers' Markets in your county can be directed to your EBT Benefit Access Lead or Asad Salahuddin of the EBT Project office at 916-263-4941.

EBT STATISTICS—FEBRUARY 2003

(These statistics are based on seven counties live on the EBT system as of February 2003.)

♦ 74,948 food stamp grants were deposited via EBT totaling approximately $13.6 million in benefits.

♦ There were 446,618 approved food stamp transactions in which clients redeemed approximately $12.6 million in benefits.

♦ Food stamps were redeemed at 3,336 retail locations.

♦ 56,229 cash grants were deposited via EBT totaling approximately $23.6 million in benefits.

♦ There were 215,027 approved cash transactions in which clients redeemed approximately $23.1 million in benefits.

♦ Clients accessed cash benefits at 2,540 POS locations and 5,195 different ATM locations.

♦ Average fees and surcharges paid per cash household: $2.08.

♦ 30% of all ATM transactions are at surcharge free locations.

♦ 47% of cash benefits are withdrawn at surcharge-free ATMs.

♦ 25% of cash benefits are withdrawn at POS locations.

♦ Clients made 258,521 calls to the Customer Service ARU. 13,576 client calls were handled by Customer Service Representatives.

♦ 7,024 clients were able to change their PIN through the ARU.

COUNTY TRAINING

Both staff and client training are proceeding successfully in accordance with schedule. With 15 counties operational and three additional counties actively engaged in staff and client training, the training process is now well defined and well established. Specific differences in how each county approaches client conversion and training are being addressed on a county-by-county basis. The state has worked closely with Citicorp EFS and The Quest® Group to address open training-related issues and to improve the content and scope of training. The state continues to monitor staff training in each county to ensure that consistency in delivery is maintained.

Host-to-host training will require a somewhat different approach than the current administrative terminal training provided by The Quest® Group. Both ISAWS and LEADER are currently planning for host-to-host training:

♦ The ISAWS consortia and The Quest® Group are currently engaged in planning and development for host-to-host training. ISAWS screens are ready and an ISAWS EBT Training Manual has been drafted.

♦ LEADER began initial planning for host-to-host training. CEFS, The Quest® Group and the state are meeting with Los Angeles County to define roles and responsibilities for development of a training plan and delivery of training.

The state is currently reviewing the number of staff trained and issued administrative terminal logon IDs in each county relative to the number of staff that actually use the administrative terminal system. It clear many staff do not use the system. The findings from this review will assist future counties in determining the appropriate number of staff to be trained.

In addition, the state has developed a Training Fact Sheet to assist in defining training roles and responsibilities. The Training Fact Sheet is intended to assist counties during the planning for both staff and client training to ensure county training roles and responsibilities are well understood before county training actually begins. (The Training Fact Sheet is part of the County Readiness Guide.)

EBT USERS GROUP UPDATE

In the February 2003 Bulletin, plans were announced regarding formation of an EBT Users Group. Subsequent to that announcement, the concept was discussed with the California Welfare Directors Association (CWDA). Rather than creating a formal Users Group, the following approach will be implemented:

♦ Utilize EBT Roundtables as forums for sharing "lessons learned."

♦ Involve the CWDA EBT Advisory and/or Information Technology Committees when input/direction is required for substantial modifications/enhancements to the EBT system or input to proposed policies.

On an ad-hoc basis, the EBT Project will also establish informal groups of experienced county users to provide input on assessing system functionality, collecting data, and critiquing new ideas.

LEGEND

ARU—Automated Response Unit
ATM—Automated Teller Machine
CDS—Case Data System
CEFS—Citicorp Electronic Financial Services
CWDA—County Welfare Directors Association
ISAWS—Interim Statewide Automated Welfare System
PIN—Personal Identification Number
POS—Point of Sale